

Remarks on Signing the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008

May 21, 2008

I want to thank the Members of Congress who've joined us as I sign the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. It's a piece of legislation which prohibits health insurers and employers from discriminating on the basis of genetic information. In other words, it protects our citizens from having genetic information misused. And this bill does so without undermining the basic premise of the insurance industry.

I also want to pay homage today to—and not only to Members of the Congress who are behind me but also to Senator Ted Kennedy, who has worked for over a decade to get this piece of legislation to a President's desk. All of us are so pleased that Senator Kennedy has gone home, and our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family.

Now it's my honor to sign the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. H.R. 493, approved May 21, was assigned Public Law No. 110–233.

Statement on the Death of Hamilton Jordan

May 21, 2008

Laura and I are saddened by the death of Hamilton Jordan. Hamilton Jordan was a man whose love for American politics and his country took him at a young age from the State capitol in Georgia to the White House. As President Carter's close adviser, Hamilton played an important role in shaping our Nation's policies. We value his service to our country.

Hamilton Jordan was also a great community leader, using lessons learned during his personal struggle against cancer to encourage other cancer survivors to remain optimistic and embrace the blessings of each day. Through their work with Camp Sunshine, he

and his wife, Dorothy, have helped thousands of children enjoy life as they cope with the challenges of cancer.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Jordan family.

Proclamation 8259—National Maritime Day, 2008

May 21, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On National Maritime Day, America honors our highly skilled mariners who sail the high seas, support those on the front lines of the war on terror, and promote commerce around the world.

Since 1775, the United States Merchant Marine has served our country, helping America become a great maritime power. During the Second World War, courageous mariners were among those who suffered greatly—hundreds of ships were lost to enemy action, and many mariners made the ultimate sacrifice. We pay tribute to these heroes who answered the call to serve when our Nation needed them most. Today, our merchant mariners continue to protect our homeland, including by supporting our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In times of peace and war, these brave patriots help keep our Nation safe and strengthen our economy. By transporting American goods across the oceans, merchant mariners facilitate commerce and advance trade. These Americans honor the noble traditions of seafarers and enrich our country's maritime heritage.

In recognition of the importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine, the Congress, by joint resolution approved on May 20, 1933, as amended, has designated May 22 of each year as "National Maritime Day," and has authorized and requested that the President issue an annual proclamation calling for its appropriate observance.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 2008, as National Maritime Day. I call upon the people

of the United States to mark this observance by honoring the service of merchant mariners and by displaying the flag of the United States at their homes and in their communities. I also request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 23, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 27.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008”

May 21, 2008

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2419, the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.”

For a year and a half, I have consistently asked that the Congress pass a good farm bill that I can sign. Regrettably, the Congress has failed to do so. At a time of high food prices and record farm income, this bill lacks program reform and fiscal discipline. It continues subsidies for the wealthy and increases farm bill spending by more than \$20 billion, while using budget gimmicks to hide much of the increase. It is inconsistent with our objectives in international trade negotiations, which include securing greater market access for American farmers and ranchers. It would needlessly expand the size and scope of government. Americans sent us to Washington to achieve results and be good stewards of their hard-earned taxpayer dollars. This bill violates that fundamental commitment.

In January 2007, my Administration put forward a fiscally responsible farm bill proposal that would improve the safety net for farmers and move current programs toward more market-oriented policies. The bill be-

fore me today fails to achieve these important goals.

At a time when net farm income is projected to increase by more than \$28 billion in 1 year, the American taxpayer should not be forced to subsidize that group of farmers who have adjusted gross incomes of up to \$1.5 million. When commodity prices are at record highs, it is irresponsible to increase government subsidy rates for 15 crops, subsidize additional crops, and provide payments that further distort markets. Instead of better targeting farm programs, this bill eliminates the existing payment limit on marketing loan subsidies.

Now is also not the time to create a new uncapped revenue guarantee that could cost billions of dollars more than advertised. This is on top of a farm bill that is anticipated to cost more than \$600 billion over 10 years. In addition, this bill would force many businesses to prepay their taxes in order to finance the additional spending.

This legislation is also filled with earmarks and other ill-considered provisions. Most notably, H.R. 2419 provides: \$175 million to address water issues for desert lakes; \$250 million for a 400,000-acre land purchase from a private owner; funding and authority for the noncompetitive sale of National Forest land to a ski resort; and \$382 million earmarked for a specific watershed. These earmarks, and the expansion of Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage requirements, have no place in the farm bill. Rural and urban Americans alike are frustrated with excessive government spending and the funneling of taxpayer funds for pet projects. This bill will only add to that frustration.

The bill also contains a wide range of other objectionable provisions, including one that restricts our ability to redirect food aid dollars for emergency use at a time of great need globally. The bill does not include the requested authority to buy food in the developing world to save lives. Additionally, provisions in the bill raise serious constitutional concerns. For all the reasons outlined above, I must veto H.R. 2419, and I urge the Congress to extend current law for a year or more.

I veto this bill fully aware that it is rare for a stand-alone farm bill not to receive the